BIG SPIRITS COMICS SPECIAL
シュトヘル
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伊藤悠
BIG SPIRITS COMICS SPECIAL
ISBN978-4-09-183866-7
C9979 ¥590E
9784091838667
1929979005900
定価：本体590円＋税
雑誌 45788-66 小学館
BOOK DESIGN：ALBUM GRAPHICS

BIG
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COMICS
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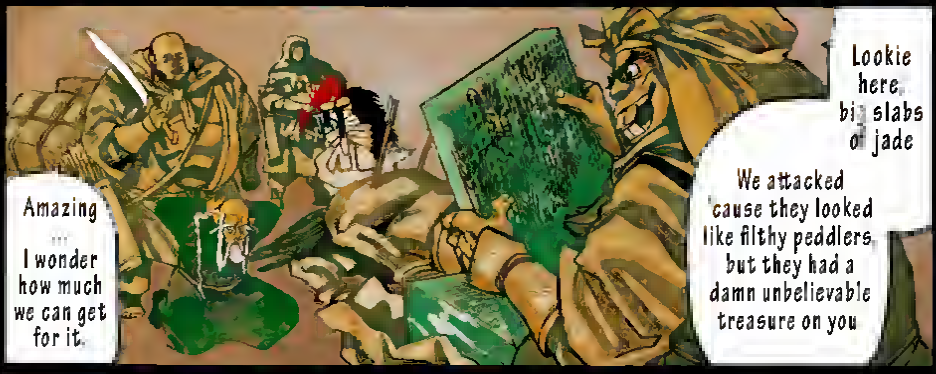
✱ The characters on the cover and inside flap mean 'witch' in Tangut

Don't kill the woman; we can sell her!
Chapter Ⅲ
Tangut Script


Lookie here, big slabs of jade
We attacked 'cause they looked like filthy peddlers but they had a damn unbelievable treasure on you
Amazing ... I wonder how much we can get for it.

We can get money for women, but brats are a bother.
Kill 'im and get rid of the body.
What should I do with the brat over here?

Chapter XIII
Tangut Script

ﾌﾞﾝ

ﾋｭﾝ
ﾋｭﾝ

WHAT D'YOU THINK YOU'RE ...!?
HUH

Ah
...

PUT THAT DOWN!

...
heh!
Have you ever pointed that thing at a human, boy?

UNAAH!
Yurul-?

There's no need to kill him, is there?
That's enough

See?
It's alright now, Yurul

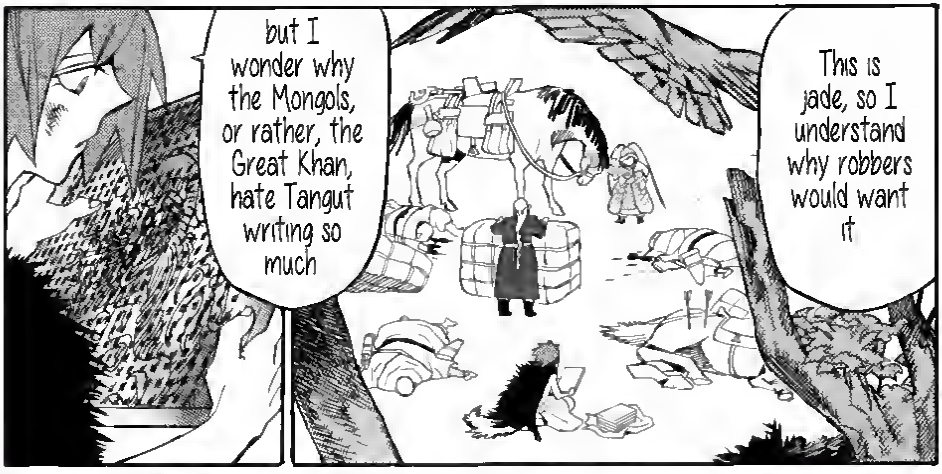
UHAAAH!
AAAHH!

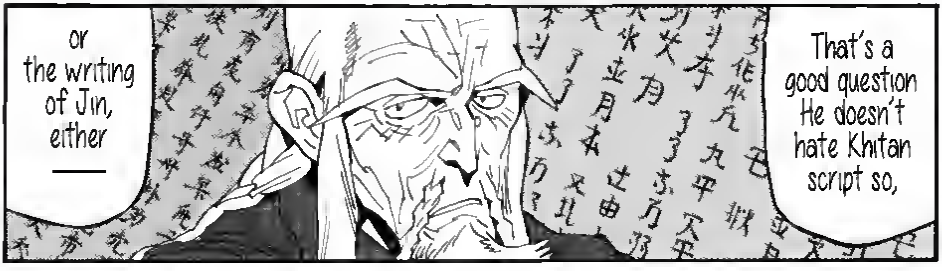
8

your hair

It's alright
... I killed.
It wasn't 'Shut Hell', I ——

I think it's perfect.
It's the same as yours now, isn't it?


This is jade, so I understand why robbers would want it
but I wonder why the Mongols, or rather, the Great Khan, hate Tangut writing so much


That's a good question He doesn't hate Khitan script so,
or the writing of Jin, either

Harabal said
that he understood the reason
'Harabal'
Yurul
You stopped calling him your big brother?

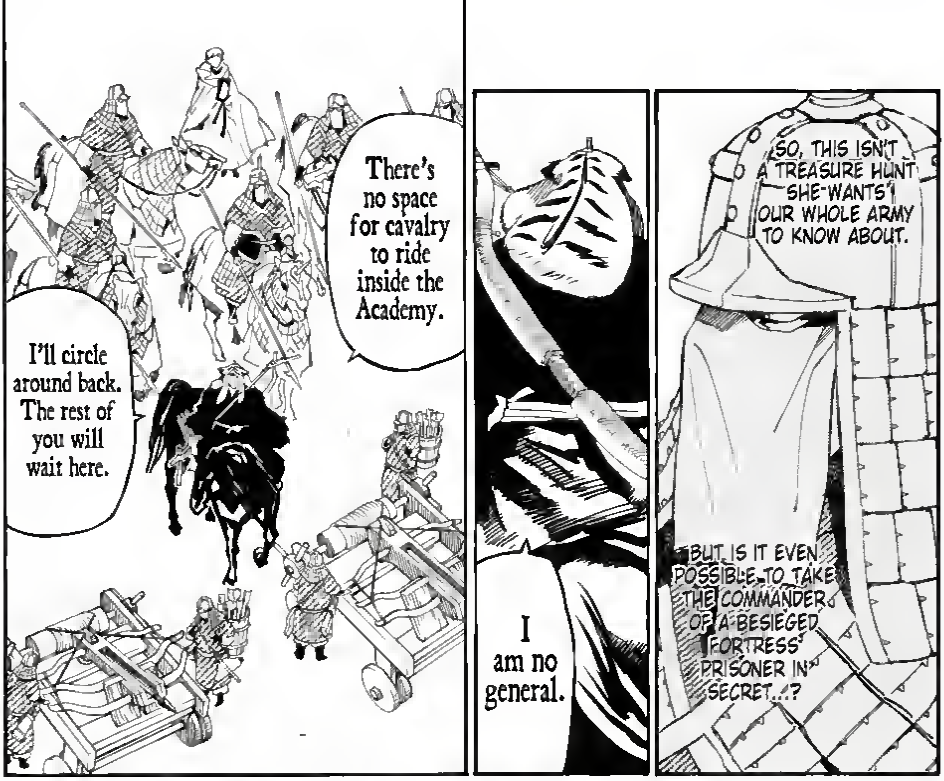
10

—it's revenge
...for Shut Hell.

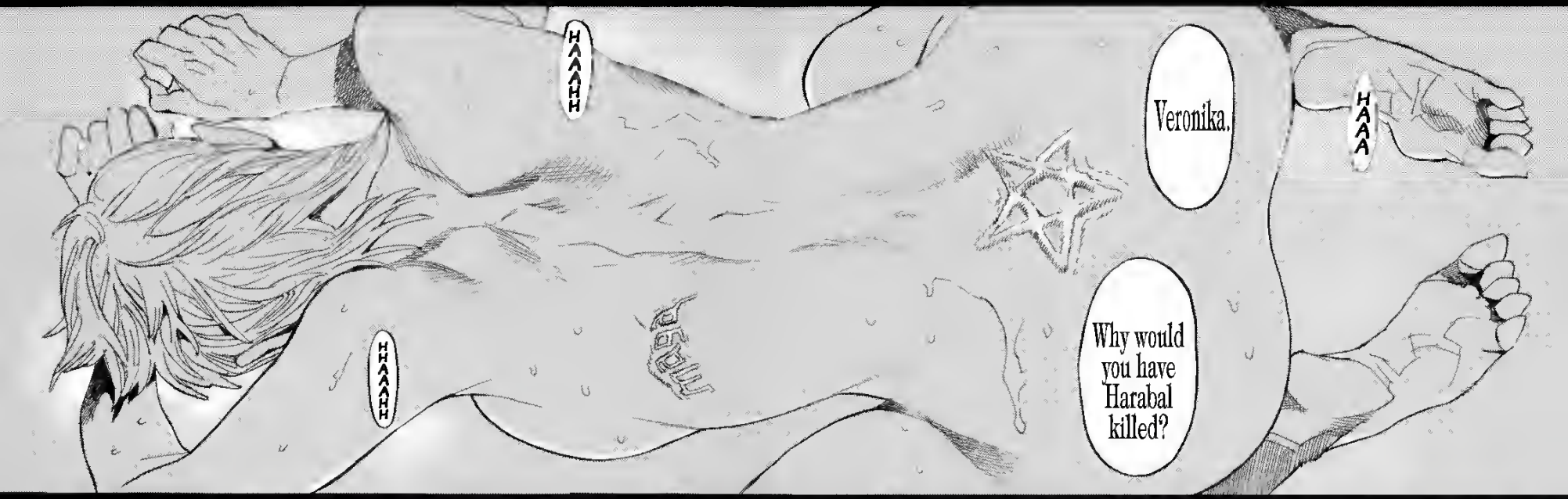
So long as it exists, however, we cannot burn the script of the western Xia to nothing ...
The existence of the Voice of Jade is most likely unknown even to minor officials of the Great Academy.

※Great Academy: The national library of the western Xia

I see the general they call 'God's Arrow' is quick on the uptake.
The director's name is Gulshan.
—You're telling me to capture the head of the Great Academy alive and question him, then.


There's no space for cavalry to ride inside the Academy.
I'll circle around back. The rest of you will wait here.
I am no general.
SO, THIS ISN'T A TREASURE HUNT SHE WANTS OUR WHOLE ARMY TO KNOW ABOUT.
BUT IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE TO TAKE THE COMMANDER OF A BESIEGED FORTRESS PRISONER IN SECRET...?
Tell me your name.
May the fortunes of war favor you.

... Veronika.
THE 'ARROW OF GOD' HARABAL ...



Because, he became known, as ...

mh

the god's arrow general, and ...

Harabal's, power, that is, the Tsog tribe's power... A single tribe growing in, prominence and gaining strength,

Ha

Ha

in a camp fortified by sons, brothers, and loyal, trusted retainers,

Ha

Cannot but, invite disorder ...

Whether he means to rebel or not, he is a threat, ——

Ah

Ah

Ah

HARABAL IS FINE AS HE IS.

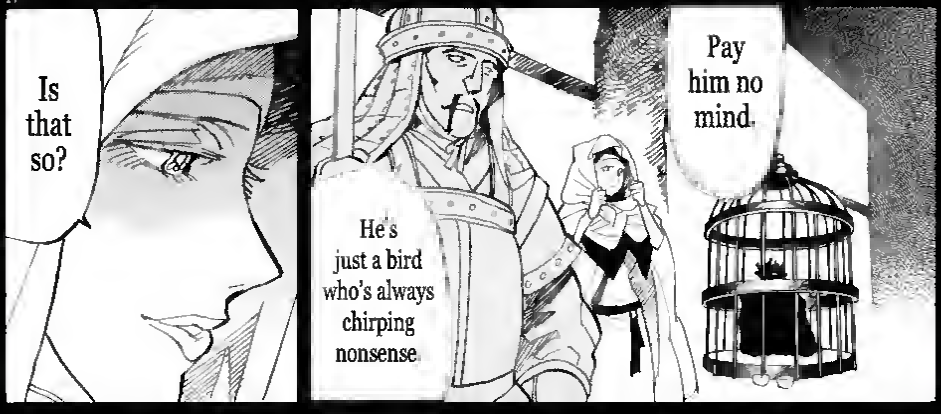
Aaahh ...

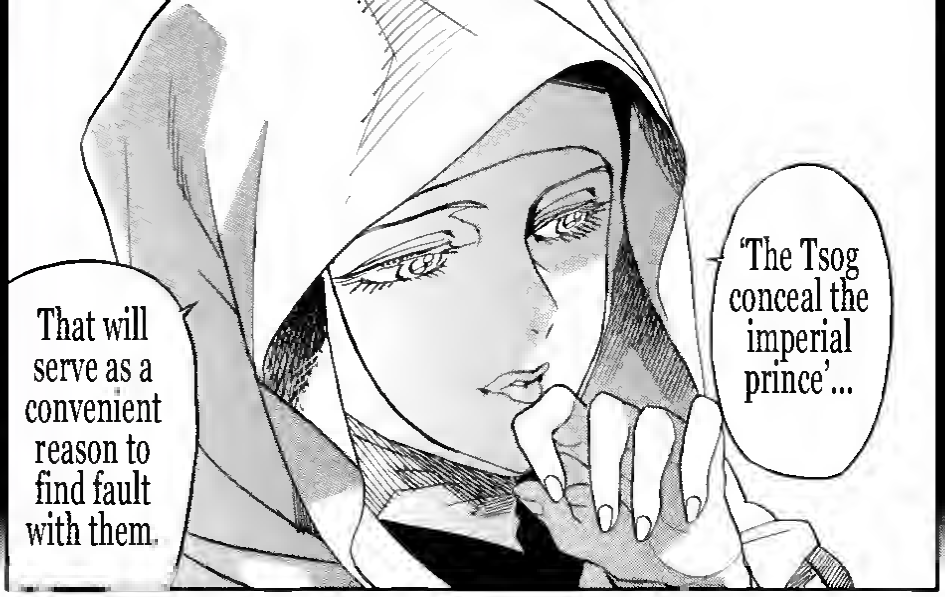
but... he won't be spared on account of that, will he?
If we kill Harabal, who stands out, the loyalty of the other tribes will waver as well
—— My lord. You, who will continue to overwhelm and crush many tribes, and even nations
Do you admire him because he is a danger?
Well now.
HE POSSESSES PLEASING MARTIAL TALENTS.
HE'S HAD HIS FILL OF BEING FEARED AND BOWED TO ...
PROOF THAT HE ALWAYS DESIRES ENEMIES?
PROMISING, IF IT IS.

In that case, he alone will not be shown affection
We will prevent him from having a group
Those women saw it, didn't they?
THAT BACK.
ONE DAY, THE WOMEN WHO SEE IT WILL NOT NEED TO BE KILLED.
WHEN THERE IS NO ONE IN THIS WORLD WHO KNOWS THE SCRIPT OF THE TANGUT.

Harabal of the Tso conceals the imperial prince.
The distortion is there.
ガシャ
ガシャ

You must correct it...
You must correct it.
ガシャ
ガシャ


Is that so?
He's just a bird who's always chirping nonsense.
Pay him no mind.


'The Tsog conceal the imperial prince'...
That will serve as a convenient reason to find fault with them.

Come over here. Come on!
RUSTLE
WHOOM
oh, how nice of you
Boldu is tired
He's kept moving without resting for me since Yanzhou.

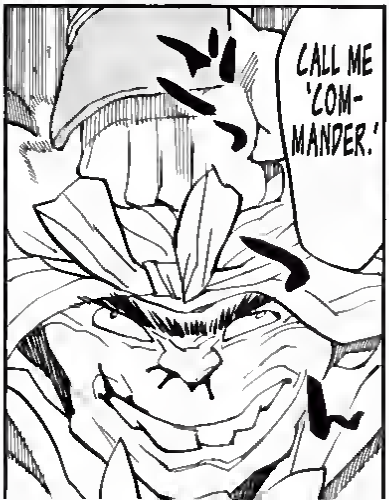
Some-how ...
it seems like something from a long time ago.
What did I say when I shared a futon with Suzuki-chan?
... yeah.
See? It's warm.
Sudoh.
You said you know my descendant, right?
I suppose they had no skill with the bow or a sword.
Oh, but they probably smell a bit alike.
Yeah. It's far away though.
Is there such a country in this world?
But in my country, no one carries a bow or a sword.
Probably not worth talking about.

It's way, way east of here.
East across the sea.
Beyond the sea ...
My descendants are able to live in an idyllic land ...
I'm glad to hear it. I believe you.
You're awfully trusting.
Doesn't my story sound crazy to you?
I don't know about that

An idyllic land...?
I'VE CERTAINLY ...
COME A VERY LONG WAY.
THE INITIAL SHOCK HAS WORN OFF...
AND SHUT HELL ISN'T SHOWING HERSELF.
NOT SINCE THEN ... I WONDER WHY.

HERE THEY ARE! I FOUND THEM.
THE ONES FROM EARLIER TODAY!
ガバ

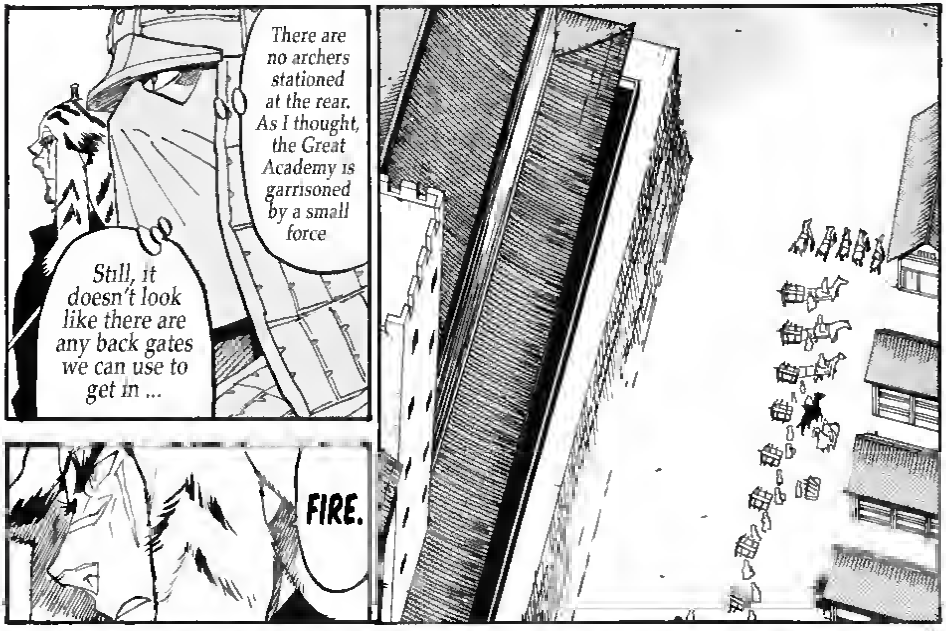
YURUL
...
as I thought
We should have killed him after all

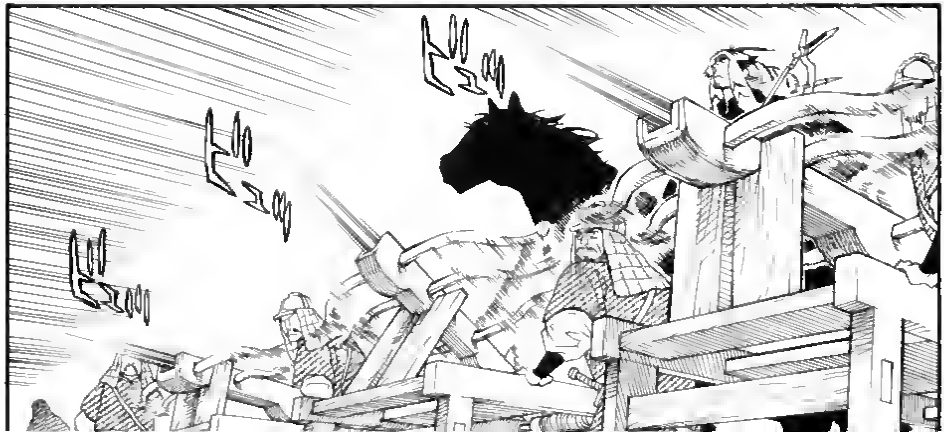

CALL ME 'COM-MANDER.'

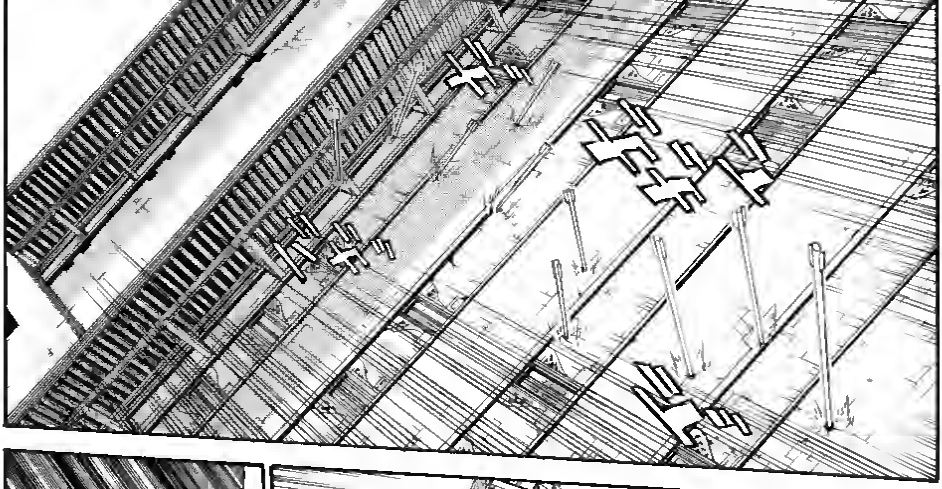
Boss! There're huge jade slabs hidden in their luggage.
Let's get 'e...

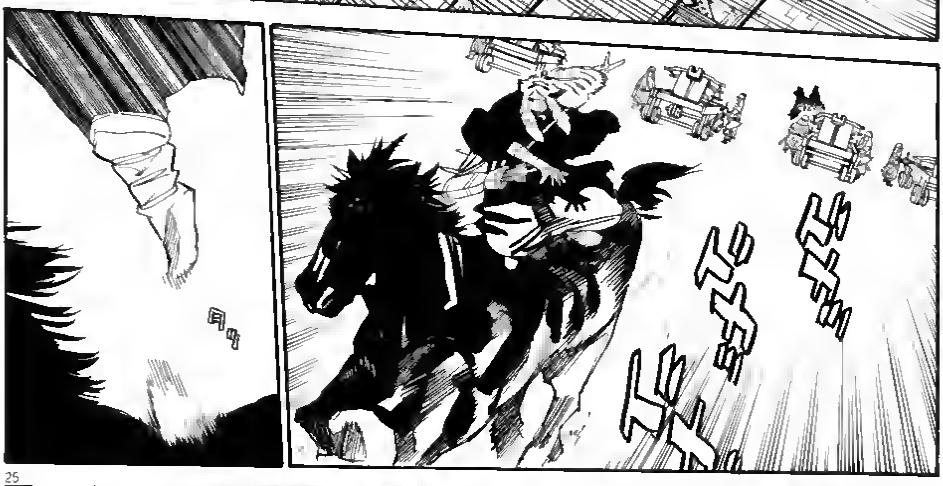
We're different from robbers.
We're proud soldiers of the great nation of Jin, aren't we?
If we happen to encounter people of an enemy nation while on reconnaissance ...
Never-theless, ...
AND CONFIS-CATE THEIR VALU-ABLES.
THEN WE OUGHT TO ELIMINATE THEM,

'Soldiers of Jin'
...


There are no archers stationed at the rear. As I thought, the Great Academy is garrisoned by a small force
Still, it doesn't look like there are any back gates we can use to get in ...
FIRE.
Ahhhh






ドドド

……！

BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T PREVENT ALL THEIR COUNTRY'S WRITING FROM BEING BURNED?
NOTHING BUT HIGH OFFICIALS

So, they took their own lives without even waiting to witness that
Down below, the lower ranking officials are resting and being killed to the bitter end.

...
BOTH ARE FOOLISH WAYS TO DIE.

ﾍﾍﾍ...

So, you've come.
... Mongol.

Gulshan, director of the Grand Academy?
I have something to ask you.
Chapter XXIV
Ifa

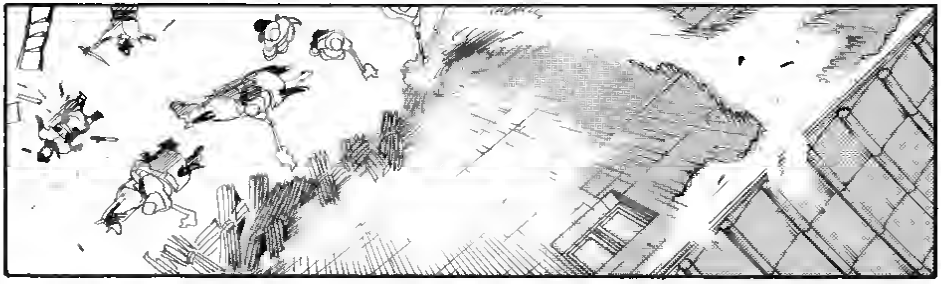
If you're looking for something, search as much as you like.
I still have a little work left to do.

If it will be ash either way, then you might as well wait.
It will all be ash tomorrow.
There's no point.
... IT SEEMS HE KNOWS WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR.

... I won't wait long.
The flames are spread-ing.

It's not about whether it's useless or not.
It's my job, so I want you to let me finish it.

Thank you, young Mongol.
——There's something strangely familiar about you.



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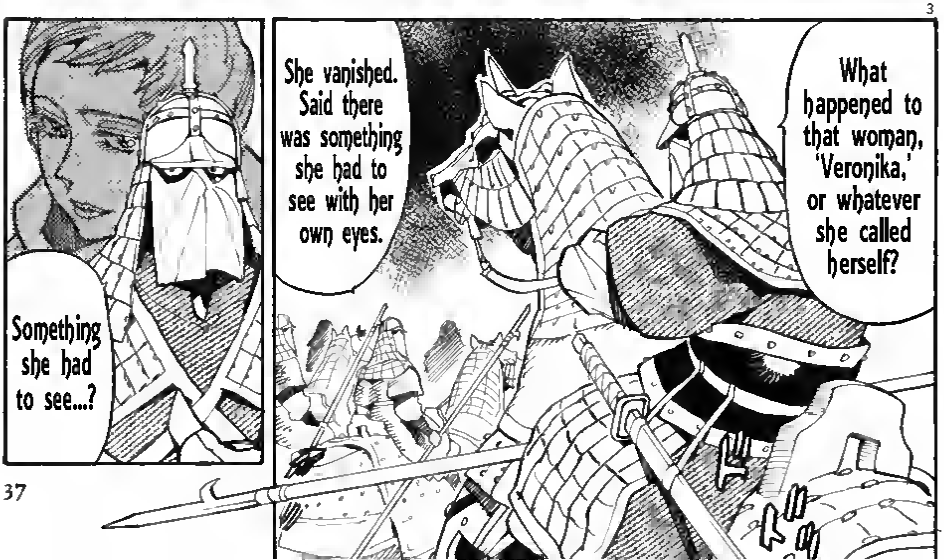
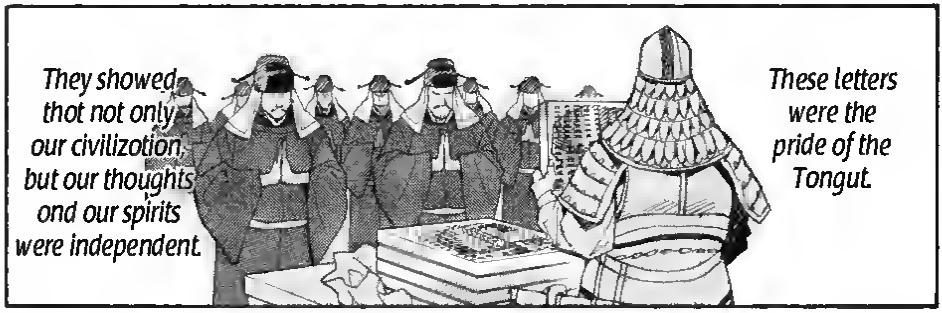
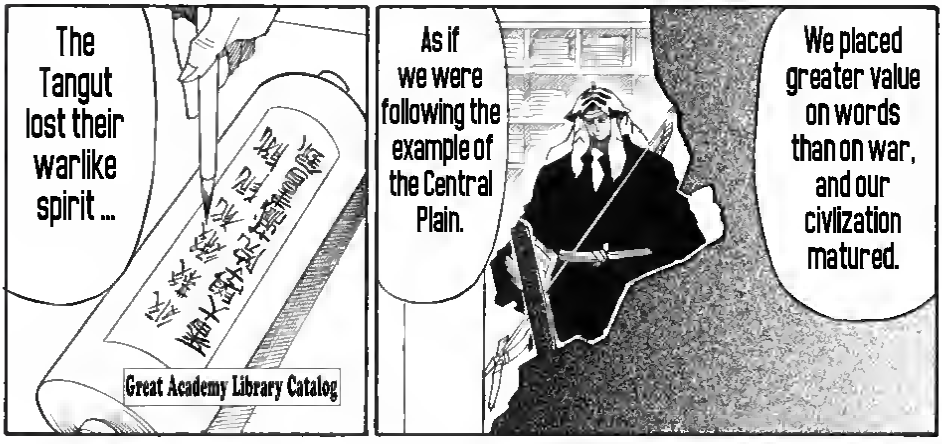

What happened to that woman, 'Veronika,' or whatever she called herself?
She vanished. Said there was something she had to see with her own eyes.
Something she had to see...?

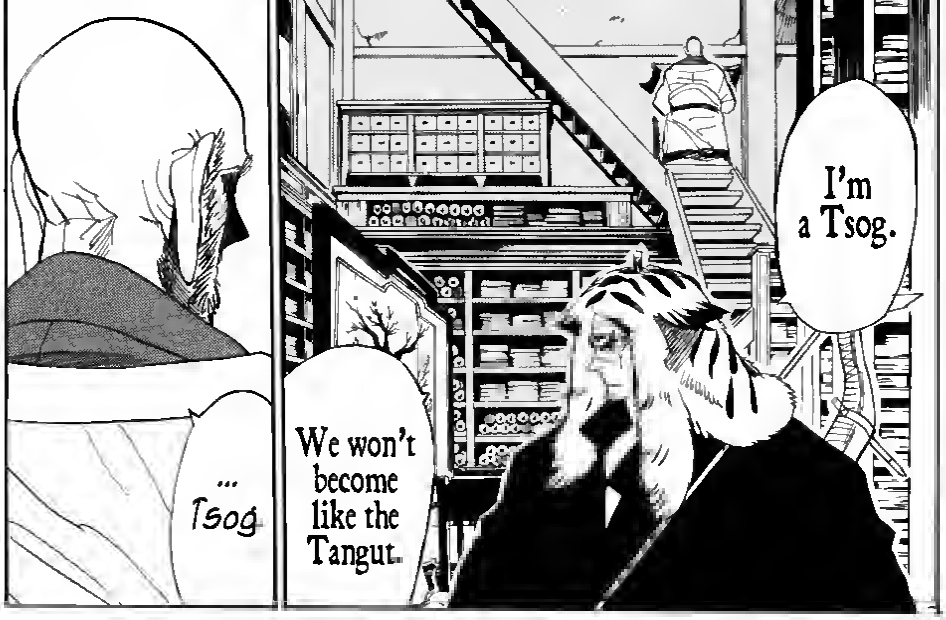
A powerful, horse-riding people—
...The Tangut were once Mongols.
When we won independence from the Song, we created writing.

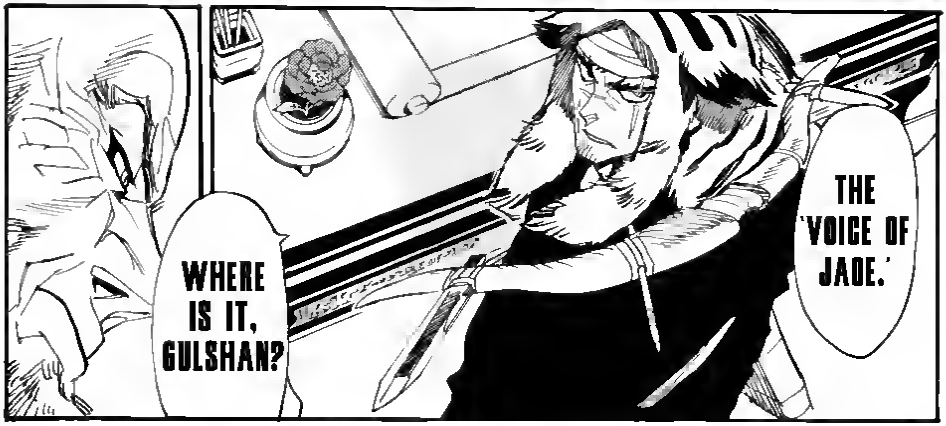

They showed thot not only our civilizotion, but our thoughts ond our spirits were independent.
These letters were the pride of the Tongut.

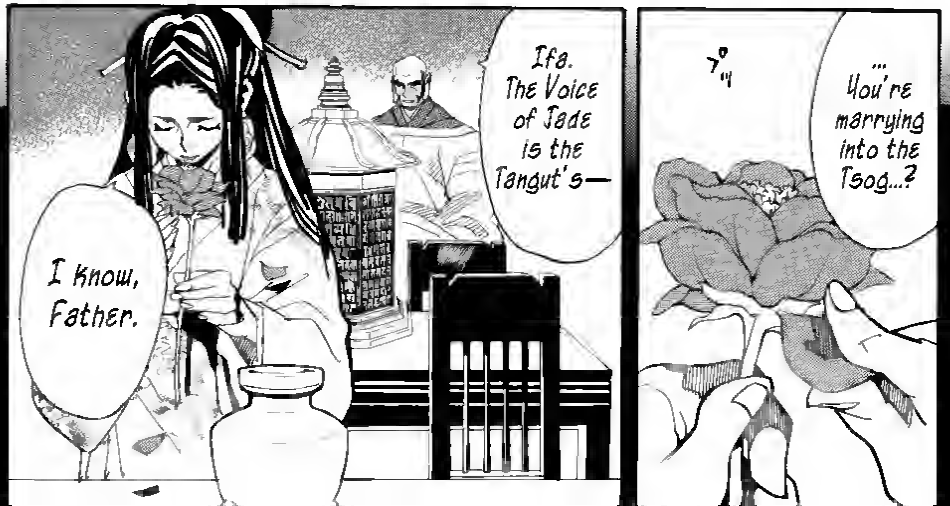

The Tangut lost their warlike spirit ...
Great Academy Library Catalog
As if we were following the example of the Central Plain.
We placed greater value on words than on war, and our civlization matured.

Now, At last,
Will we be destroyed by a strong, horse-riding people?
It's as if we may be killed by our past selves.

Young Mongol.
In the old days, the Tangut were Mongols ...
Now,
my work is at an end.


I'm a Tsog.
We won't become like the Tangut.
... Tsog


THE 'VOICE OF JADE.'
WHERE IS IT, GULSHAN?


Ifa. The Voice of Jade is the Tangut's—
I know, Father.
... You're marrying into the Tsog...?

You're telling me that I am a tool to conceal it, aren't you?
The treasure of the Tangut, and our soul.
Once you marry, you will be a woman of the Tsog. You may take with you sutras, instruments of prayer, and—— books of your choosing.
Whatever you like; I will hold nothing back.

Where did you get that knowledge from...?
They weren't suddenly thought up on the steppe...
—— the ballistas you use... were originally Song weapons.
What did you look at in order to make them ...?

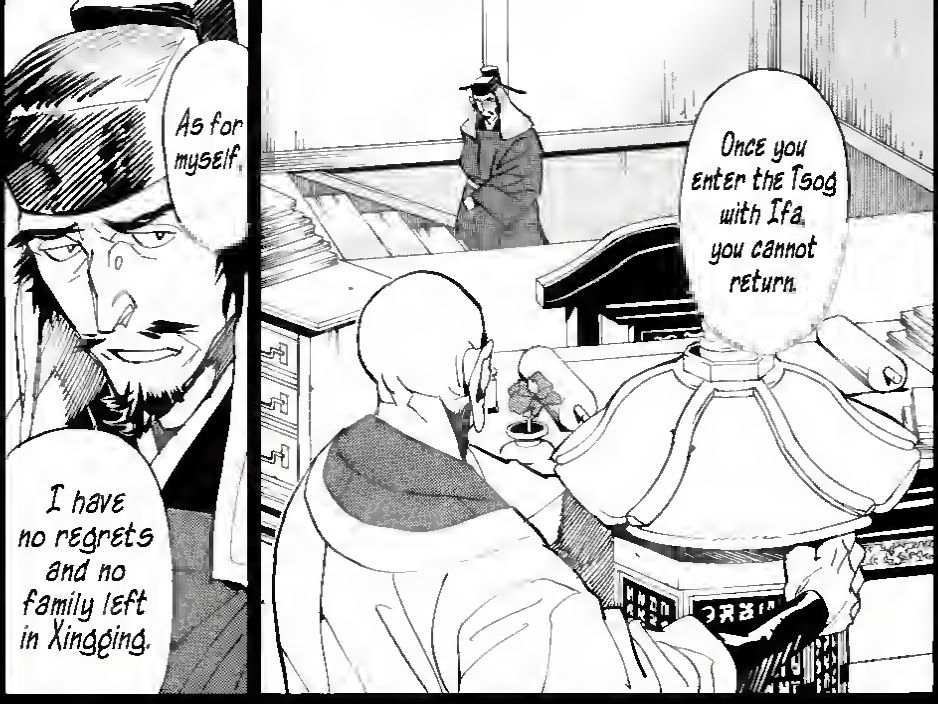
The 'Voice of Jade.'
...I threw it away.

Talk.
The time I can wait is passed.

I cannot allow myself to be captured.
I've heard that there is no one who can hold their tongue under Mongol torture.
EVEN IF THAT MEANS I MUST TRADE BLOWS WITH YOU.
IFA

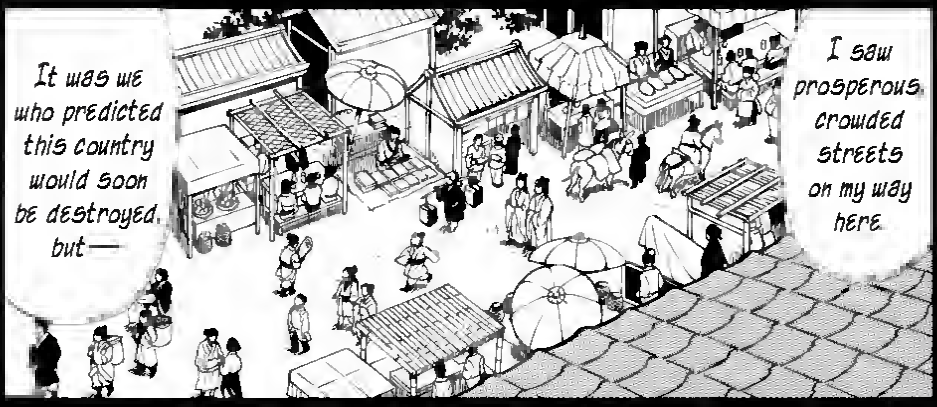
끄

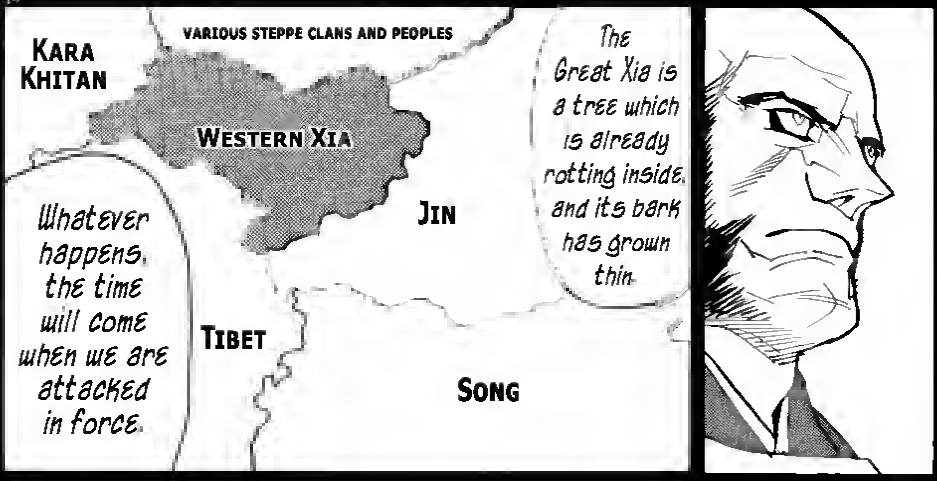
Are the preparations finished?


As for myself,
I have no regrets and no family left in Xingqing.
Once you enter the Tsog with Ifa, you cannot return.

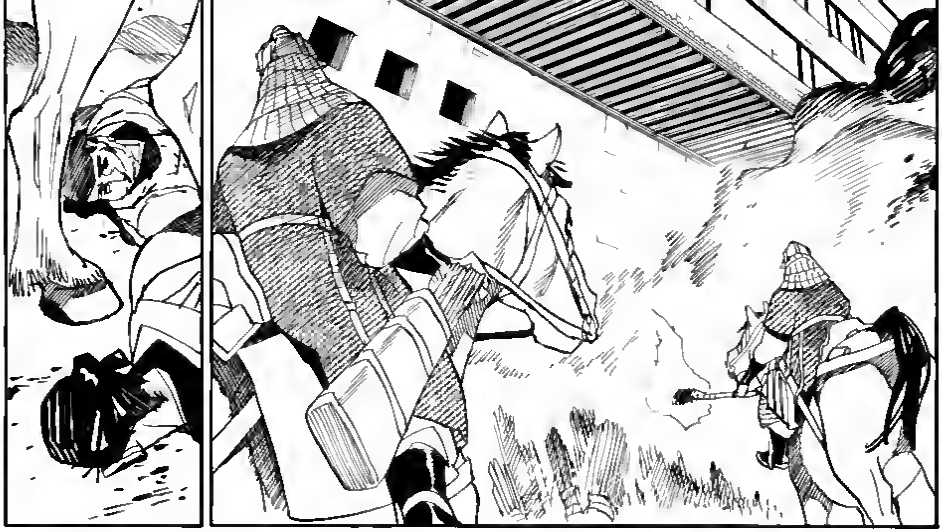
I entrust the Voice of Jade to you.
It can only be opened with your needles. As long as no one smashes it, at least.
But Gulshan, Lady Ifa —
Among the Tsog ...
She is fond of books.

...
Honestly, I don't want to believe it.
Will it be then Jin who destroy us ...?
—After the Jin destroyed Khitan, they forbade the use of Khitan Script.


It was we who predicted this country would soon be destroyed, but—
I saw prosperous, crowded streets on my way here.

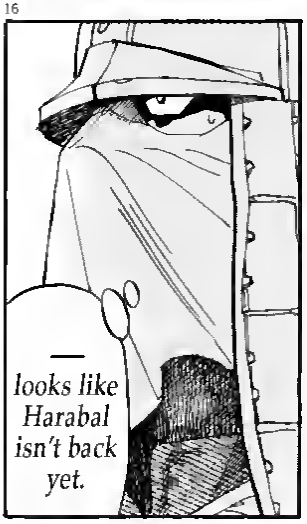

VARIOUS STEPPE CLANS AND PEOPLES
KARA KHITAN
WESTERN XIA
JIN
TIBET
SONG
Whatever happens, the time will come when we are attacked in force.
The Great Xia is a tree which is already rotting inside, and its bark has grown thin.

I'm sorry.
It will be painful.
Among the Tsog, call yourself 'Boldu,' or something of that kind.
But you, who will not return, will not witness the day of our destruction with your own eyes.
I meant for you, Gulshan.



That woman... was she really a messenger of the Great Khan ...?

16


— looks like Harabal isn't back yet.

Was it that too-sweet voice of hers, or —
Now that I think about it, we acquiesced without demanding any proof.

17
Gulshan.
I can't imagine that you meant to hit me with that.
……

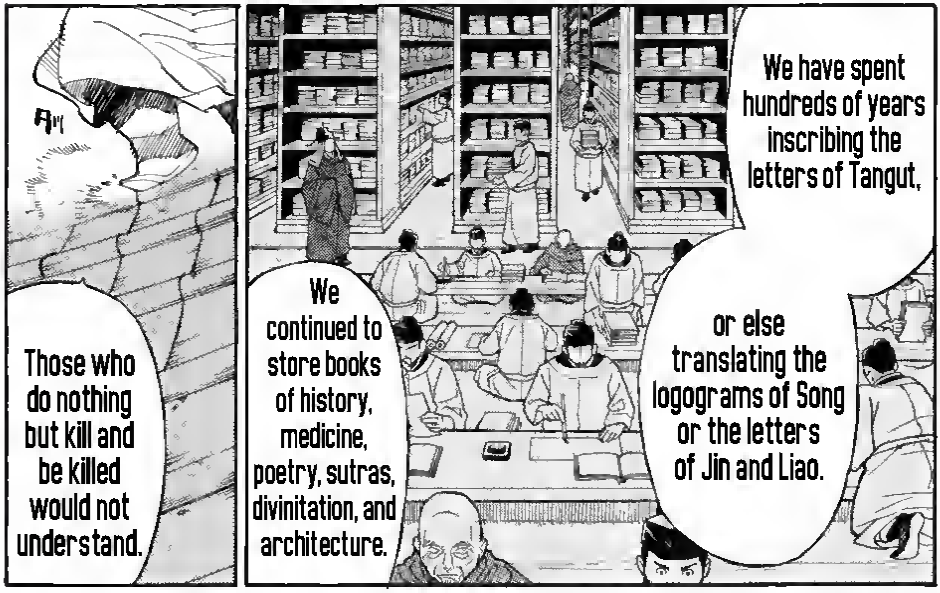
19

18

…SUCH BARB-ARITY!

Are you saying that forcing others to martyr themselves is not an act of barbarism?
They all remained here of their own free will.

20


We have spent hundreds of years inscribing the letters of Tangut,
or else translating the logograms of Song or the letters of Jin and Liao.
We continued to store books of history, medicine, poetry, sutras, divinitation, and architecture.
Those who do nothing but kill and be killed would not understand.

ONE'S LIFE'S WORK BECOMES LIFE ITSELF.
IT BECOMES SOMETHING WORTH RISKING ONE'S LIFE FOR.

...Come back here.
—HE INTENDS TO BURN TO DEATH ALONG WITH THE BUILDING, THEN?

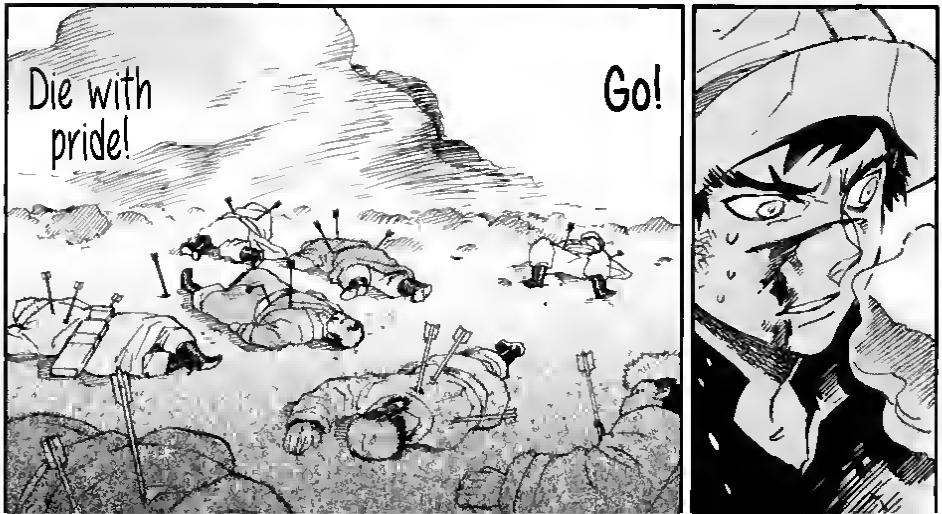
The chirping of a nation that looked down on warfare and ended up dead is empty.
You mistook what it was you ought to have protected, Gulshan.

THOSE WORDS, THAT THERE IS SOMETHING ONE SHOULD RISK ONE'S LIFE FOR, ARE A SICKNESS.

EVERY TIME THAT SICKNESS HAS CONTROL, A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE DIE.

If we surrender
The Mongols are in no mood to be merciful.
—Chief! If we keep up like this, everyone will die!

What will become of the pride we should be protecting, even at the cost of our lives!?
What will become of our Tsog Pride!?


Die with pride!
Go!

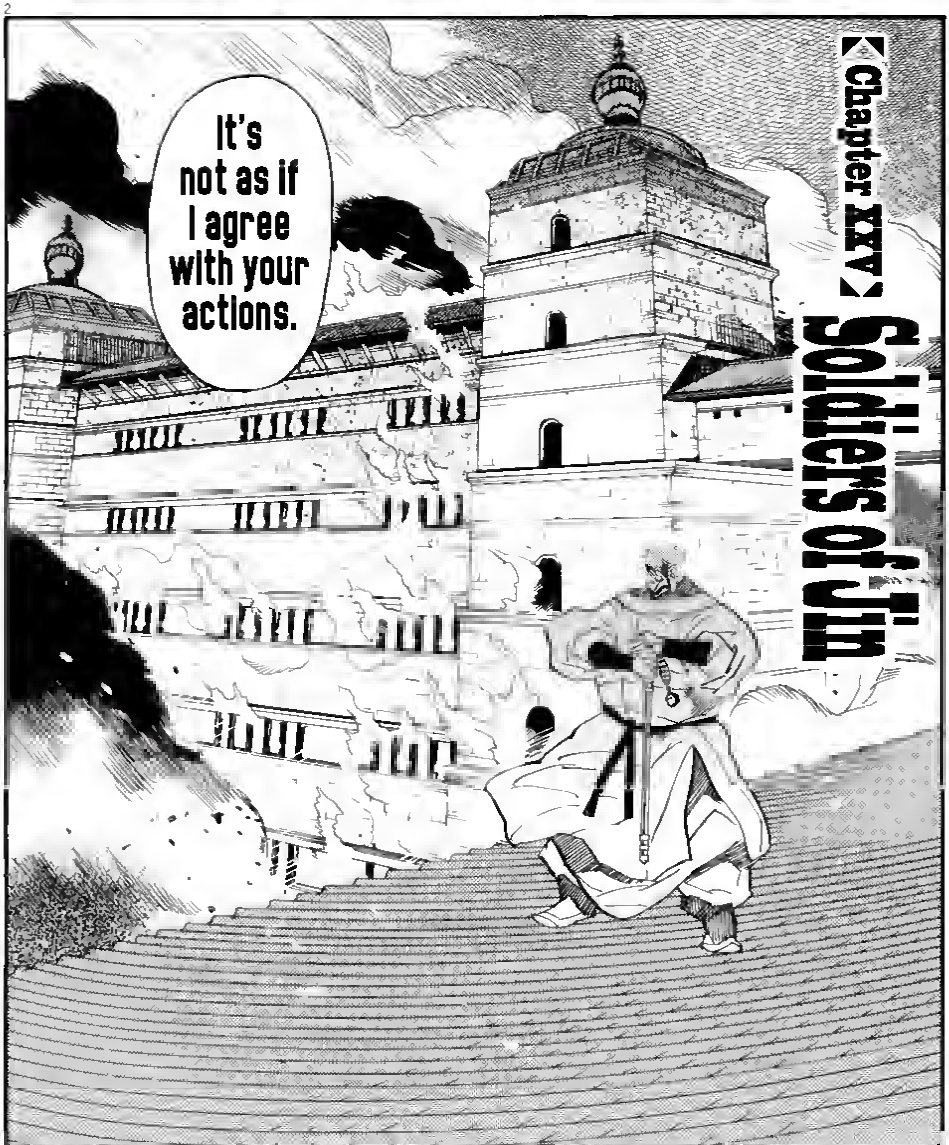
THOSE INFECTED WITH THIS ILLNESS CANNOT SEE THE PEOPLE IN FRONT OF THEM.
THEY USE PEOPLE AS TOOLS, AND SHAMELESSLY FAIL TO CONSIDER THEIR KINSMEN AND DEPENDENTS.
...THE ONES THEY OUGHT TO PROTECT.

IFA
IT SEEMS YOUR WORDS HAVE RETURNED TO ME IN AN UNEXPECTED FORM...
——As long as they protect only their blood and tribe,
aren't humans just beasts, eternally struggling for territory?

Tell me the whereabouts of the 'Voice of Jade.'
Don't make me kill you, Gulshan.
I will not go with you.
28
I probably shouldn't be the one to kill you.

Chapter XXV Soldiers of Jin

I can only die here, in the Great Academy.


Chapter XXV
Soldiers of Jin
It's not as if I agree with your actions.

—Too bad.

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ドゴ
ドゴ
ビュオ
ヒュオ
ヒュオ
ヒ

——EVEN IF I BLOCK THE SHAFT, THE WEIGHT KEEPS COMING.

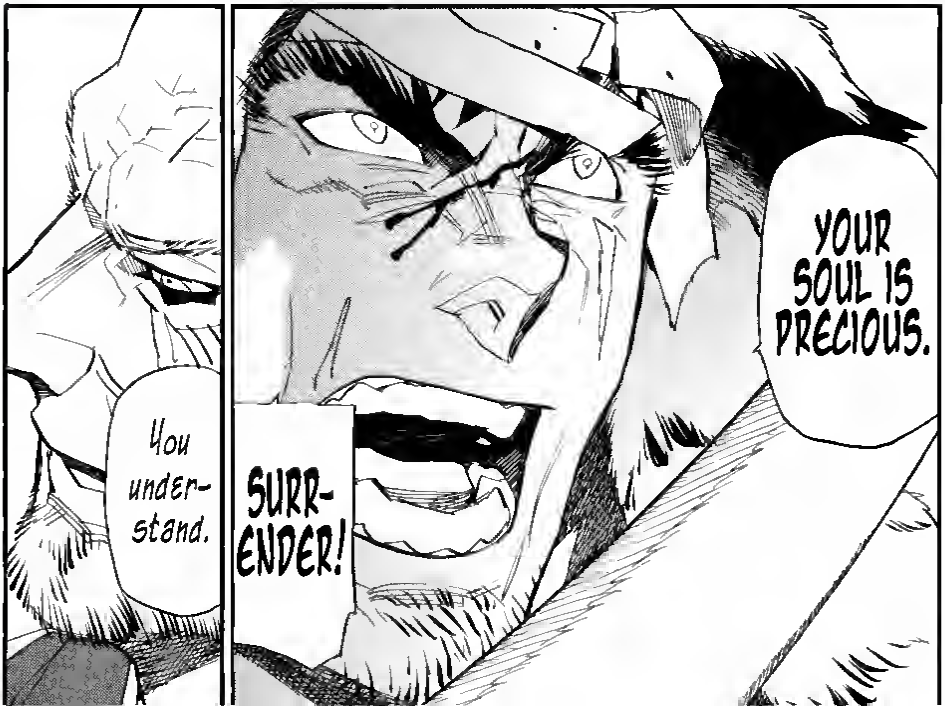
IT'S FAST
AND HEAVY!

ヒュン
ヒュン
ヒュン
ヒュン

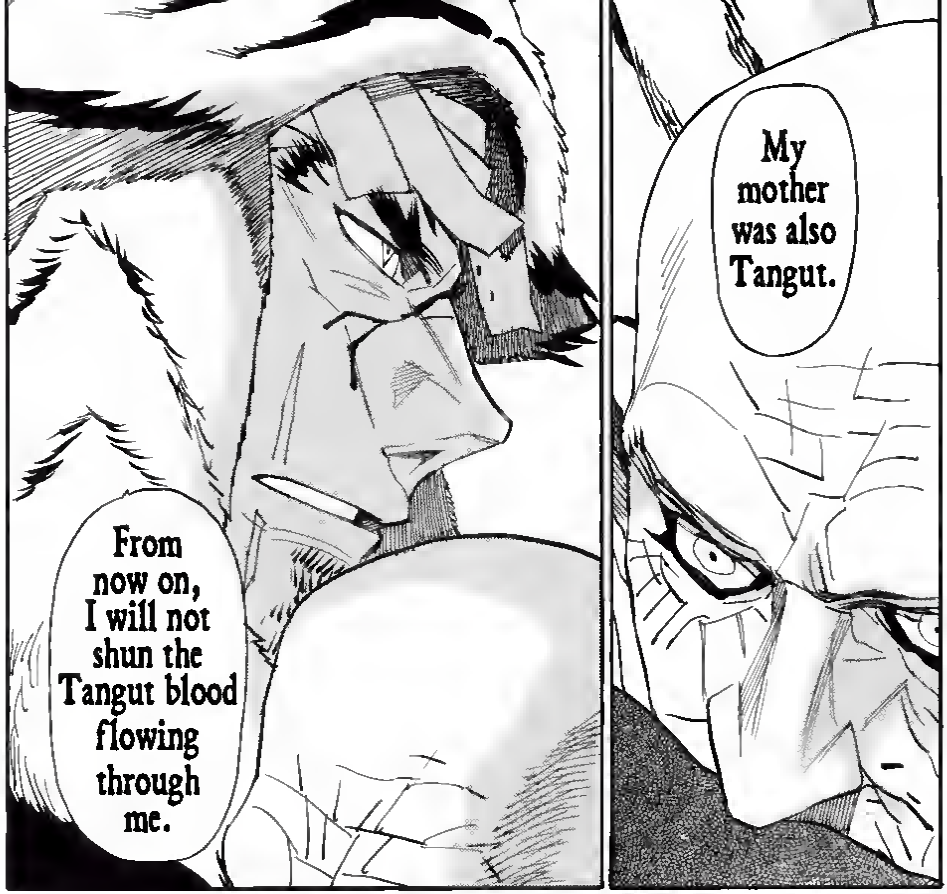
ガ
THAT WEAPON MAY BE TO PROTECT WRITING, BUT—
THIS MAN IS NO CIVIL OFFICIAL WHO JUST SITS AND WAITS FOR DEATH.

...I never imagined I could be pushed back from this position.
Your only disadvantage ...
is that your strength has diminished with age. That's all.

DON'T FALL AT MY HAND FOR A REASON LIKE THAT.
—SO, IT'S OVER.

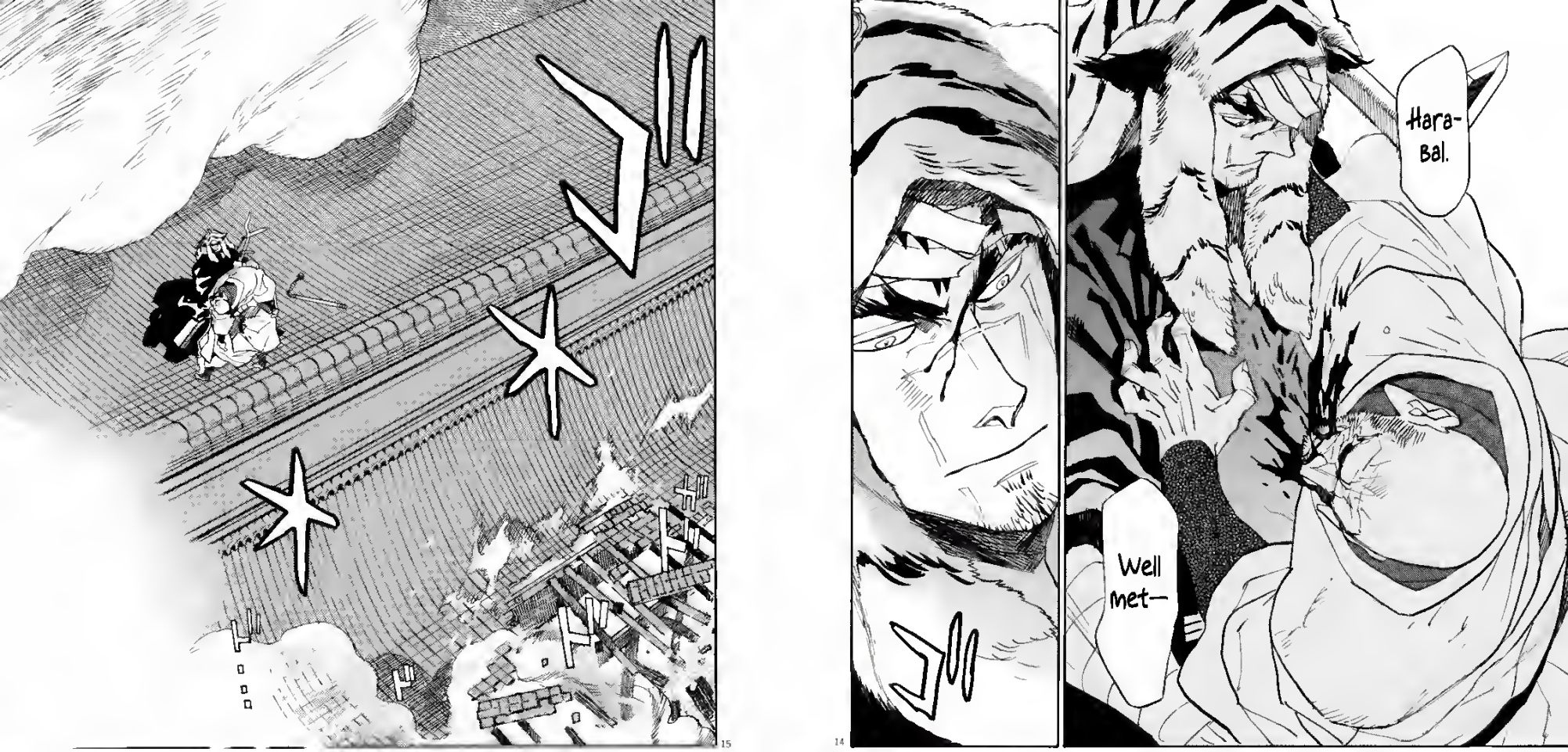

You under-stand.
SURR-ENDER!
YOUR SOUL IS PRECIOUS.

Gulshan.
...You were a Tangut I didn't want to kill.
drip
THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE I CAN DIE.


My mother was also Tangut.
From now on, I will not shun the Tangut blood flowing through me.

...Your name... Your—
ゴロゴロ
... mother's ...name ...?

My mother's name is Ifa.
... I am Harabal.
Well met


Hara-
Bal.
Well
met—

South of Xingqing,
Near the border of Jin ——

Here, a cane.
... Thanks
!
カ"

Thanks are all very well,
but make sure you tell that lady that Mr. Ibaha was nice to you.
See, she's looking over here and warrying about yau.

Her clothes are odd and her hair isn't styled ...
but isn't she pretty, if you take a close look at her?

Sudoh is...?
"Pretty"...?
There was someone else who said so.
But now she's ...
a different person

What, are you angry?
You really don't like people saying things like that about your friend?
This man... has he figured it out?

Are these jade slabs your only valuables?
Sudoh! we have to fight.
No.
THERE ARE DOZENS OF THEM AIMING AT US.
I DEFINITELY CAN'T TAKE THEM THE WAY I AM NOW.
Out of the way, woman. We'll find some use for you.
Payback for my arm We'll turn the brat into a pincushion

Now, listen up.
If you kill this kid, it'll mean a big loss for you.

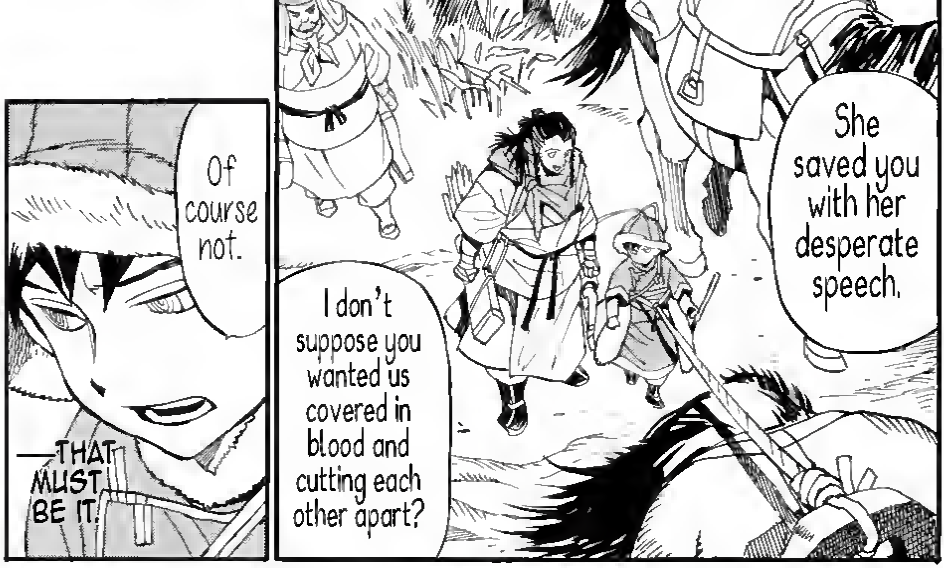
The fact that we're carrying these jade slabs proves he's the real deal.
If things went as planned, we could get ransom money for these instead of selling them.

He's the son of the Mongol general who occupied Xingqing.
This old man and me kidnapped him and were making our getaway.

Ibaha. How about it?
It's true that the brat is Mongol while the woman and the old man are both Tangut.
BUT IF SHE ISN'T ABLE TO FOOL THEM,
WE'LL LOSE BOTH.
...To think she would try to secure the safety of both Lord Yurul and the Voice of Jade with a bluff like this.

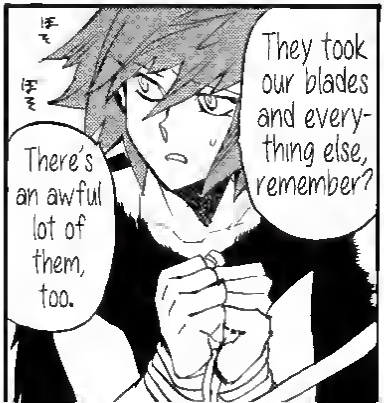
As expected Captain, you've found us a huge trophy.
...THIS GIRL'S NOT ALL THERE.
.....
Thot Mongol general must have looted it at Xingqing and given it to his son.
What the woman says is true. It's engraved with Tangut characters ...

SHE'S NOT A VERY GOOD LIAR.
WHO'D SHIELD A KIDNAPPED ENEMY CHILD WITH THEIR BODY?
21
That's the damn kid who did this to my arm!
Alright, don't kill him. Take'em with us.
That's crazy!
—I see. Looks like we'll be able to turn a profit.
Don't mock me.

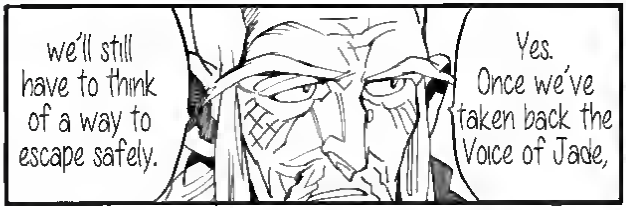

She saved you with her desperate speech.
I don't suppose you wanted us covered in blood and cutting each other apart?
Of course not.
—THAT MUST BE IT.

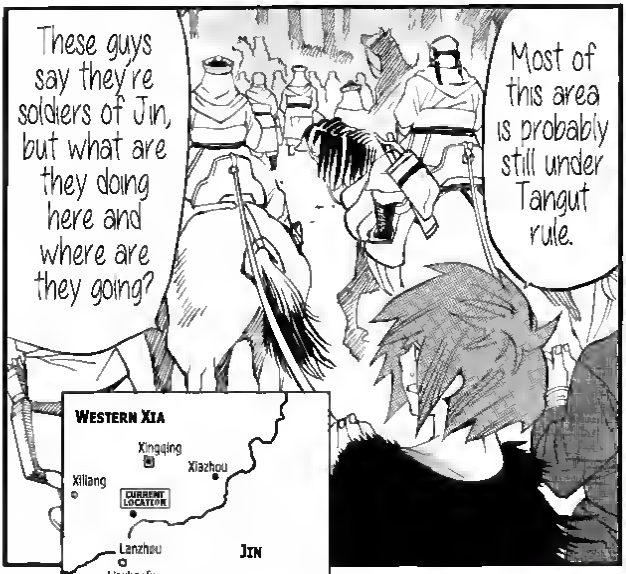
Let's wait for a chance to take back the Voice of Jade.
While they're asleep, for instance.

IT FEELS LIKE HE'S ALWAYS CARRYING IT.


They took our blades and everything else, remember?
There's an awful lot of them, too.

We can't be reckless.
—As long as Shut Hell won't come out.


we'll still have to think of a way to escape safely.
Yes. Once we've taken back the Voice of Jade,

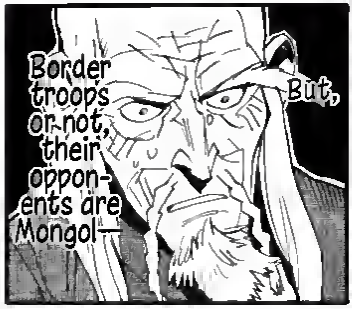

These guys say they're soldiers of Jin, but what are they doing here and where are they going?
Most of this area is probably still under Tangut rule.
WESTERN XIA
Xingqing
Xiazhou
Xiliang
CURRENT LOCATION
Lanzhou
JIN
Linzhaofu

Shut Hell is still inside this body.
But—
what will motivate her to come out ...?

We're scouting, young lady.
the captain is such a greedy hag, yau knaw? That's why—
We're suppose ta be preparing for war with the Mangols and strengthening the barder region, but—
DID HE JUST CALL ME 'YOUNG LADY'?
Y...
24
Are yau bastards trying ta spail my gaad maad?
That's playing dirty.
Hey, Ibaha, don't keep the woman all to yourself.

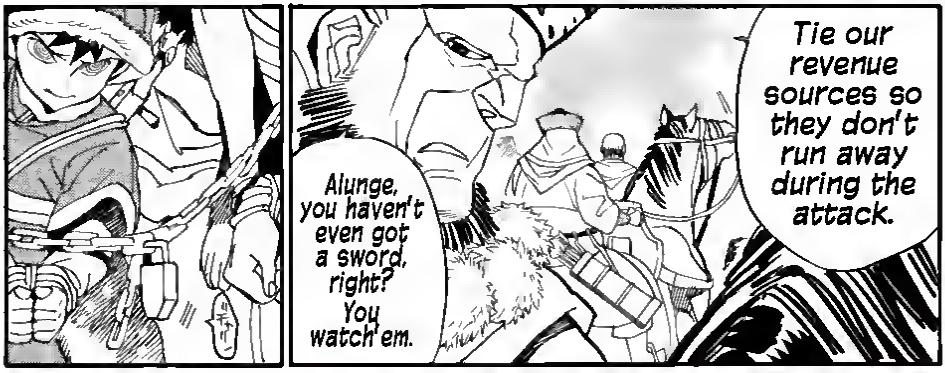
——So, we step across the border, raid villages, and call it scouting.
We also relieve traveling merchants of everything they've got.
A disaster wasn't it, young lady?
The captain might not like you as much tomorrow, you know.
Syco-phant.
Tch
But today's destin-ation is different.

It can't be. Have they come to attack before the war even starts?
Mongol military quarters ...?

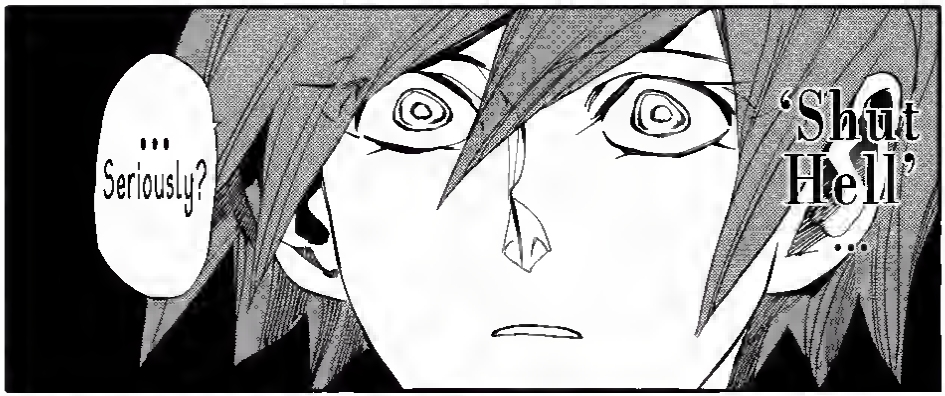

Border troops or not, their opponents are Mongol—
But,

HE WANTS TO MAKE THAT NAME EVEN MORE FAMOUS, AND HE CAN'T WAIT FOR THE WAR TO START.
IN ANY CASE, OUR CAPTAIN IS THE SLAYER OF THE MONGOL SOLDIERS, 'SHUT HELL.'

...
Huh?


Tie our revenue sources so they don't run away during the attack.
Alunge, you haven't even got a sword, right? You watch 'em.

Just be patient for a little while.
I'll come to get you soon.
.....


‘Shut Hell’…
…Seriously?

That Gorilla —?
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